United Nations A/C.3/61/SR.12

General Assembly
Sixty-first session

Official Records

Distr.: General
2 November 2006

Original: English

Third Committee

Summary record of the 12th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Wednesday, 11 October 2006, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. Al Bayati ..... (Iraq)

Contents

Agenda item 61: Advancement of women (*continued*)

(a) Advancement of women (*continued*)

(b) Implementation of the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women and of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (*continued*)

This record is subject to correction. Corrections should be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned *within one week of the date of publication* to the Chief of the Official Records Editing Section, room DC2-750, 2 United Nations Plaza, and incorporated in a copy of the record.

Corrections will be issued after the end of the session, in a separate corrigendum for each Committee.

06-56337 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Agenda item 61: Advancement of women (*continued*) (A/61/283 and 303)

(a) Advancement of women (*continued*) (A/61/38, 122 and Add.1, 292 and 318)

(b) Implementation of the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women and of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (*continued*) (A/61/174)

1. **Ms. Awino** (Uganda) said that the Ugandan Constitution, promulgated in 1995 after the Fourth World Conference on Women, guaranteed gender balance and fair representation of women on all constitutional bodies and women's economic property and maternal and political rights. The Ministry for Gender, Labour and Social Development spearheaded and coordinated the mechanisms for promoting gender equality, including the formulation of gender-sensitive policies, programmes and plans and gender mainstreaming. It had developed a social development sector investment plan to promote social protection, gender equality, equity and human rights for the poor and vulnerable.

2. Her Government was implementing a universal primary education programme and, as of November 2005, a universal secondary education programme aimed at ensuring the attainment of the goals of Education for All. Overall enrolment levels had improved, with girls accounting for 49 per cent of students. Enrolment of girls at public universities was 35 per cent, and 80 per cent of beneficiaries of adult literacy programmes were women. The agricultural extension programme of the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries had mobilized and organized rural women, training them in agricultural production, fish farming and record keeping. The Government was also taking measures to ensure that women had access to productive resources and improved access to labour markets, including regional and international markets. It was creating an enabling environment for the provision and use of information and communication technology, especially among marginalized groups, including women.

3. Her Government was committed to the Vienna Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. It believed that there needed to be a conscious move to increase the number of women in key decision-making positions in the processes of conflict resolution and peacebuilding. It had identified women's sexual and reproductive health as a critical area to address in the National Action Plan. Its national health policy promoted gender equity in relation to the distribution of health services and the planning and implementation of health programmes. It had taken a leadership role in preventing the spread, promoting treatment and mitigating the impact of HIV/AIDS. As a result, the prevalence rate had dropped from 30 per cent in 1989 to the current rate of 6.5 per cent.

4. Other challenges included securing the provision of financial services beyond mere microcredit, to Ugandan women, particularly in rural areas, and improving access to markets for their produce. Resources had not reached sufficient levels to ensure adequate coverage of government programmes, interventions and delivery of services.

5. **Ms. Haile** (Eritrea) said that at the beginning of 2006, her Government had submitted its combined initial, second and third periodic report to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. That very useful exercise had brought out the advances made in Eritrea in promoting women's rights and the areas that needed to be strengthened. She was happy to announce that a majority of Eritrean women were coming out in support of laws prohibiting the practice of female genital mutilation. To that end, a well-coordinated and integrated intersectoral campaign was being conducted by the Government and the National Union of Eritrean Women.

6. Her Government was fully committed to the implementation of the Beijing objectives. For historical reasons and practical purposes, the task of gender mainstreaming in Eritrea was assumed by the National Union of Eritrean Women, which had the mandate and the capacity to act as an autonomous national coordinator for the cause of women. In 2005, it had prepared a five-year National Gender Action Plan that had been adopted by the Cabinet to serve as a guiding framework for all sectors.

7. The rights of women were recognized in Eritrea's first Constitution (1997). Thirty per cent of seats in the National Assembly were reserved for women and they had the right to participate freely in elections for the

remaining 70 per cent of seats. They had the right to occupy leadership positions, to vote and stand for election for any political seat in national, regional and village assemblies and to pursue on an equal basis with men all types of economic opportunities.

8. Eritrea's Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper emphasized women's needs specifically. The Government had adopted measures to give women improved access to resources, opportunities and basic social services. It had taken steps to ensure that women enjoyed full access to quality health care and to the information necessary to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS. It had also introduced a programme for the free distribution of essential vitamins, iodine and mosquito nets to women of childbearing age.

9. In education, the Government had drawn up a National Education Gender Policy and Strategy that ensured equal rights and opportunities for both sexes and aimed to narrow disparities at the primary and secondary levels. That policy was aligned with the Millennium Development Goals and was aimed at achieving universal primary education by 2015.

10. **Mr. Ramadan** (Lebanon) said that the National Commission for Lebanese Women was the government body in charge of promoting gender equality and the advancement of women. It had set out four legal objectives in its strategy, namely, adherence to international instruments; implementation of legal texts guaranteeing women's rights; drafting of legislation to enforce women's rights and enshrining of women's human rights in all legislative texts. In that context, efforts were being focused on promoting awareness of international instruments, acceding to those to which Lebanon was not yet a party and removing Lebanon's reservations to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. School textbooks referring to the Convention and to the International Human Rights Covenants were distributed to all schools. Lebanon also benefited from and contributed to the achievements of other Arab States through its membership in the Arab Women's Organization (AWO) and the Arab Women's Parliamentary Network.

11. His Government was convinced that linking women's development with social development was an important step that should be followed up with vigour and urgency. While the development of women's rights and gender equality could be viewed from many different standpoints, none was more important to her delegation than the issue highlighted by the Beijing Platform for Action in referring to the elimination of conflict and the attainment of peace as prerequisites for the advancement of women. Israeli aggression and the continuing occupation of Lebanese land remained the greatest obstacle to the country's growth in every field, but especially in development and gender equality. Lebanese women, however, had an indomitable spirit, as exemplified by two women who had shown strength and dignity in the face of terrorism. Despite having lost an arm and a leg in a bombing attack intended to silence her, May Chidiac, a popular television presenter, had returned to her job of reporting the news. Layal Nagib, a young photojournalist, had been killed in August 2006 by a targeted Israeli aerial bomb during her investigation of the Israeli aggression in Lebanon. Her delegation condemned the killing of civilians of any religion or nationality and hoped that women in the Middle East, whether in Lebanon, Palestine or Israel, would be able to live in peace so that they could achieve their fullest potential and thereby serve their societies.

12. **Mr. Khalfallah** (Tunisia), recalling that women's active participation and involvement was crucial to any country's development process and that women's rights and status must be strengthened, said that since independence, Tunisia had consistently promoted the advancement of women. With the adoption in 1956 of the Personal Status Code, Tunisian women had been freed from certain practices that violated their dignity as human beings. Education had been made free and universal and women currently accounted for 57 per cent of university students. Tunisian women were active participants in political and economic life and occupied senior positions both in Government and in the private sector. A law would soon be enacted giving women the option of working part-time while receiving two thirds of their salary and preserving all their social security and retirement entitlements.

13. In an effort to share its experience, the Government was cooperating with other countries in Africa and beyond, under a trilateral cooperation framework in which Tunisian experts shared their expertise in various fields, including family planning, which had enabled Tunisia to bring its population growth rate down to 1.1 per cent. In November 2005, the Government had hosted the second phase of the World Summit on the Information Society. In that

regard, he drew attention to paragraph 90 of the Tunis Agenda for the Information Society and paragraphs 13 and 23 of the Tunis Commitment, calling for greater participation of women in the information society.

14. The situation of Palestinian women could not be overlooked. The persistent, systematic violation of their fundamental rights, particularly their right to life, was unacceptable and contrary to humanitarian and human rights instruments.

15. **Ms. Itoua-Apoyolo** (Congo) said that her Government had set up legal clinics for women victims of all types of violence, particularly sexual violence. Services for those women were provided in partnership with development agencies such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and civil society organizations. The Government attached high priority to gender equality and women's empowerment and the 2002 Constitution guaranteed equality between the sexes. Information and training sessions had been held to prepare women for political participation, advocacy programmes had been organized to promote women's access to decision-making positions and gender focal points had been put in place in different ministries. Much remained to be done, however, to increase women's representation in decision-making bodies.

16. In partnership with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), her Government had launched projects to reduce the school drop-out rate among girls and to narrow the gap between boys and girls in the study of science and technology. It had organized campaigns to raise awareness of the provisions of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and other instruments to which the country was a party. To combat the feminization of poverty, the Government, with the support of development partners such as UNDP and the World Bank, was promoting women's access to women's savings and loan facilities. Training was also being provided to women's groups, including teenage mothers, in such areas as sewing, embroidery, processing of agricultural and food products, catering, market gardening and information and communication technology.

17. Her Government was particularly concerned about the extreme vulnerability of women and girls to the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Accordingly, it had put in place a national plan to combat AIDS and had set up the National Council to Combat AIDS under the direct authority of the President of the Republic. Those two mechanisms took into account the specific needs of women, girls and mothers and children in the area of prevention and access to treatment.

18. Despite the progress made, her country still faced serious political, sociocultural and economic obstacles in its efforts to achieve gender equality. Her Government would redouble its efforts to achieve the Beijing objectives and the Millennium Development Goals, but it needed the assistance of bilateral and multilateral partners. The recent signing of an agreement with the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) to set up a country office in Brazzaville reflected its readiness to cooperate with such partners.

19. **Ms. Soud** (Oman) said that gender equality was a cornerstone of social justice and that His Majesty Sultan Qaboos Bin Said had called on women to participate fully in Oman's economic and social development. The Government had four women ministers and two women ambassadors and women constituted 12 per cent of the membership of the State and Shura Councils, 31 per cent of the civil service and 56 per cent of education workers. Numerous training activities for women were conducted by the Department of Women's and Children's Affairs, women's welfare needs were addressed by 39 women's associations and a women's volunteer work coordination committee coordinated relations between Oman and international organizations, including the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and its 3,000 volunteers in Oman. There were also 14 rural women's centres offering training in traditional skills and monthly social security assistance was available to women at risk of falling into poverty. The State's Basic Law guaranteed education to both genders and Sultan Qaboos University offered grants and travel opportunities to male and female students on an equal basis. Government health policies provided programmes for maternal care, birth spacing and HIV/AIDS. Recent years had seen an increase in the number of women in the labour market. The media also played an important role in raising public awareness of gender issues.

20. **Ms. Eilon Shahar** (Israel) recalled the international commitments to gender equality made at the 2005 World Summit, including the reaffirmation of the Beijing Platform for Action, and said that the full

implementation of those commitments, and women's empowerment in general, was necessary for the development of all States. In the context of globalization, the education and legal status afforded to women contributed to a country's competitive advantage. Moreover, defending women's rights and equality was a moral obligation enshrined in international conventions and United Nations resolutions.

21. She welcomed the Secretary-General's in-depth study on all forms of violence against women (A/61/122 and Add.1), which showed the lack of real progress made in that area. States and individuals should not use their customs or traditions to justify violence against women and States must prevent the downward spiral whereby the inequalities generated by gender-based violence helped, in turn, to perpetuate that violence. Legislation must be drawn up, and strictly enforced, to end impunity for violence against women. Priority must be given to mainstreaming that issue into human rights law, policies and mindsets. To that end, she welcomed the study's focus on education. In Israel, children were taught about gender equality and leadership and empowerment programmes for girls were implemented.

22. Gender-based violence and discrimination constituted an assault on women's human rights. The concept of women's equality was enshrined in Israel's declaration of independence and the country had a long history of women leaders at the highest levels of government. Much remained to be achieved, however, including the full enforcement of existing legislation in such areas as equal pay for equal work. Improvements to legislation on the status of women had recently been embarked upon, including in the areas of violations of women's labour law and equal opportunities in the workplace. To help achieve Israel's goal of zero-tolerance for gender-based discrimination and violence, the parliamentary Committee on the Status of Women was responsible for proposing gender-related legislation, monitoring the implementation of existing laws and liaising with women's non-governmental organizations.

23. Israel participated wherever possible in international efforts to alleviate poverty and promote gender equality, for example, through its Golda Meir Mount Carmen International Training Centre, which aimed to promote the development and empowerment of women, particularly those of the South. The training given focused on community development, including civil society, microenterprise and early childhood education, and had already been dispensed to over 10,000 women. In 2005, the Centre had hosted an international conference on "Migration and Gender Issues within the Millennium Development Goals", attended by women leaders from around the world. In September 2006, the International Women's Commission for a Just and Sustainable Israeli-Palestinian Peace, a group which included Palestinian and Israeli women leaders, had met in New York to help move peace negotiations forward. She hoped that that meeting, and subsequent ones, would ultimately contribute to achieving peaceful coexistence between the two sides. Israel was a progressive society and, as international concepts of equality and rights evolved, it was committed to remaining at the forefront of change.

24. **Ms. Sendid-Berrah** (Algeria) expressed concern that, despite States' many commitments and national, regional and international efforts over the years, the problem of violence against women continued to affect all countries, regardless of differences of identity, tradition, religion, culture and development. That situation was confirmed by the Secretary-General's in-depth study on all forms of violence against women. Violence against women not only violated their human rights but also endangered their health and hindered the achievement of the goals of equality, development and social cohesion. Her Government was committed to combating all forms of violence against women through the introduction of new legislation, including the criminalization of sexual harassment, and the provision of psychological support. In addition, campaigns involving local and national government representatives and associations, schools and the media were being carried out to raise awareness of violence against women.

25. Her Government was deeply committed to the Beijing Platform for Action and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and was bringing its legislation into line with their provisions and recommendations. Family law had been updated to include new provisions in such areas as equal rights and obligations of spouses, granting women full powers to conclude marriage contracts and accommodation arrangements for divorced mothers with custody of young children. Nationality law had also been amended to establish equality between women and men and allow Algerian citizenship to be

passed on through the mother and through marriage with an Algerian man or woman. The principle of gender equality was enshrined in Algeria's Constitution and was scrupulously respected in both civil and criminal law. In addition, the issues of gender equality and advancement of women were increasingly addressed by public policies and civil society actions. To consolidate those achievements, her Government, as a signatory to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, intended to step up measures for the protection of girls to enable them to achieve their full potential and grow up in an environment where they were respected and valued. It would also continue its efforts to ensure the full participation of Algerian women in all spheres of social, political and economic life.

26. **Mr. Huan** (Malaysia) said that in order to realize its full potential in pursuing sustainable development, a nation must harness all its human resources, including women. Women's progress had contributed significantly to the overall progress of his country. Creating an enabling environment and mainstreaming a gender perspective into the national agenda were necessary for establishing equal rights and opportunities for women and men. In that spirit, his Government was endeavouring to reform the relevant mechanisms and institutions to enable them to act to redress gender inequality and was drawing up enabling legislation and policies in that area. Malaysia's Constitution recognized and safeguarded women's rights and explicitly prohibited discrimination against women. Existing legislation was being reviewed, including in the area of Islamic family law, to eliminate any provisions that might have a negative impact on women. All future draft legislation would be analysed from that perspective.

27. The 1989 National Policy for Women and its Plan of Action were being reviewed to ensure equitable access by women and men to resources, information, opportunities and the benefits of development. Similarly, greater prominence had been given to promoting gender equality with the inclusion of a section on women and development in Malaysia's five-year development plans. With a separate ministry dedicated to women's issues, gender mainstreaming had been enhanced throughout the country. A committee on gender equality, chaired by the Prime Minister, had been set up, gender focal points had been established in all ministries and government agencies and ministerial working groups and technical working groups were addressing critical areas of concern. Networking and sharing of good practices among government agencies and experts on gender issues were being stepped up.

28. Women in Malaysia had access to, and were empowered by, education, health care and employment. Their high level of education had enabled many to gain high-level jobs and participate in formal decision-making processes. Notwithstanding those achievements, setbacks to achieving the goal of gender equality, such as gender stereotyping, persisted. To address that situation, guidelines had been drawn up to ensure that the content of school textbooks was not gender-biased, gender-disaggregated data and statistics were produced for all education levels and gender centres had been set up in universities to conduct courses and research on gender issues. Reproductive health components had been integrated into national health programmes and sex education had been introduced into schools to promote healthy relationships between boys and girls, prevent abuse and enhance awareness of self-worth, rights and responsibilities. The Government had also issued guidelines to combat sexual harassment in the workplace.

29. He welcomed the Secretary-General's in-depth study on all forms of violence against women. In Malaysia, government agencies, in close cooperation with non-governmental agencies, had made significant progress in combating domestic violence and other crimes against women. One-stop crisis centres, bringing together police, medical and counselling services, had been set up in almost all Malaysian hospitals. The effectiveness of such initiatives was being monitored through a new information system based on gender-disaggregated data.

30. His Government believed firmly in the benefits of exchanging experience, practices and expertise and had been at the forefront of multilateral efforts in that area. In 2005, it had hosted the Ministerial Meeting of the Non-Aligned Movement on the Advancement of Women, the theme of which had been "Empowering Women in Facing the Challenges of Globalization". The Meeting had adopted the Malaysian delegation's proposal to set up an institute for the empowerment of women, serving the non-aligned countries, in Malaysia. Lastly, his Government appreciated the contribution of the non-governmental sector to efforts to promote the advancement of women and pledged its continued

cooperation to regional and international initiatives to achieve that goal.

31. **Ms. Romulus** (Haiti) welcomed the Secretary-General's report on measures taken and progress achieved in follow-up to the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (A/61/174). Active participation in national and international conferences by Haiti's Ministry of Women's Affairs and Women's Rights had ended the international isolation caused by the country's political and institutional crisis. The Ministry had implemented legal and practical measures to improve the status of Haitian women, giving them access to education, participation in public life, social, economic and legal safeguards and protection from all forms of discrimination, and thereby helping them to escape from poverty and violence. Considerable progress had been made in the area of legal reform aimed at combating the most blatant forms of gender discrimination. The Criminal Code had been amended to define rape as a crime against the person and abolish discrimination in the matter of adultery. Murder of a woman by her husband, and violence by a woman against her husband were no longer excusable in any circumstances. Other draft legislation submitted to the new Haitian Parliament for approval concerned cohabitation, responsible paternity and sexual abuse. In bringing its legislation into line with the international conventions signed and ratified by Haiti, the Government was demonstrating its genuine political commitment to restoring the rights of Haitian women.

32. The Ministry of Women's Affairs and Women's Rights had drawn up a five-year plan of action, in cooperation with civil society, government bodies and international agencies, for combating violence against women. The plan covered aspects such as data collection, victim support and awareness raising. The Ministry had also launched a programme to encourage women's entrepreneurship, particularly in the production sector, which included training to facilitate their access to non-traditional areas of employment. Other measures had been adopted to increase women's access to education at all levels — an urgent priority given their key role in the country's economy. Measures to combat gender discrimination included renaming certain streets and public spaces after women who had played an important role in the country's history or contributed to social progress. Her Government was committed to increasing the participation of women in all spheres of decision-making, but much remained to be done.

33. **Ms. Diallo** (Mali) said that her Government had reported recently to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women on the considerable progress made in Mali in the area of the advancement of women. In order to improve the situation of women, particularly the 78 per cent of women living in rural areas who played an important economic and social role, her Government had drawn up a Plan of Action in line with the commitments made at the Fourth World Conference on Women. The main objective of the Plan, which was in its second phase (2002-2006), was to improve the situation and status of women in Mali. The priority areas targeted were reducing female illiteracy, improving women's health, particularly their reproductive health, increasing gender equity and improving women's image in society.

34. Among the considerable achievements made, school enrolment of girls had increased by over 50 per cent and a number of women had been elected to senior public positions formerly reserved for men. Women were represented in local and national government and five of the country's 29 ministers were women. Positive discrimination and special measures for women had been introduced, including in the area of reproductive health. Awareness-raising and information campaigns on the subject of excision had been carried out, with the support of civil society. Measures to promote women's employment and combat poverty had been implemented, including legislation on equal pay for equal work, a programme to promote women's entrepreneurship in the agricultural sector and local credit schemes to support women in the informal sector. Rural women's literacy rates had increased and rural women benefited from positive discrimination in the allocation of plots of land. In the funding of political parties, incentives had been introduced to promote greater inclusion of women.

35. Much remained to be done, however, as there continued to be an ingrained bias against women in Malian society. The Government had introduced a number of strategies to remedy that problem, including awareness raising and education about discrimination and violence, awareness-raising among political opinion-makers and the promotion of positive change in traditional customs and beliefs.

36. **Mr. García** (El Salvador) said that gender equity and the empowerment of women were essential for achieving development, reducing poverty and raising living standards. The overall objective of his Government's policy for women was to ensure that women participated in national development on an equal footing with men and shared responsibility with them. In order to achieve that objective, inter-agency coordination between the Salvadoran Institute for Women's Development and the National Secretariat for the Family had been strengthened and strategic alliances have been established with the private sector and non-governmental organizations.

37. His Government attached great importance to efforts to address the problem of violence against women and girls. It was a party to the major international and regional agreements in that field, which, coupled with national actions, formed a coherent legal framework for combating and eradicating all forms of violence against women. The National Plan to Prevent and Address Domestic Violence was aimed at coordinating institutional efforts to implement, follow up and evaluate programmes, projects and activities for the prevention, punishment and elimination of violence against women and girls. Programmes to combat violence against women and girls by youth gangs were also being implemented in cooperation with other countries in Central and North America, United Nations agencies, non-governmental organizations and the private sector.

38. Progress had been made over the past decade in education for women and girls, with a steady increase in the rate of school enrolment for girls. In the health area, the Government had changed its focus in recent years to comprehensive care for women in all areas of their lives, including sexual and reproductive health. It had also ratified ILO Conventions No. 100 on equal pay for work of equal value and No. 111 on discrimination in employment and occupation.

39. His delegation looked forward to the report of the High-level Panel on United Nations System-wide Coherence, which would no doubt address the issue of restructuring the gender-related mechanisms within the United Nations Secretariat. It reaffirmed its support for the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW), which had made significant progress on the issues of women and migration; women, peace and security; and gender, governance and political participation. It also acknowledged the significant contributions of UNIFEM to the study of violence against women and girls and its support for national efforts to combat HIV/AIDS. The promotion and protection of women's human rights was essential to the transformation of Salvadoran society and the consolidation of a culture of peace that would lead to progress in the twenty-first century.

40. **Ms. Mwaffisi** (United Republic of Tanzania) said that the recommendation in the Secretary-General's study on violence against women concerning the availability of adequate data and information needed to be followed, as it was key to any meaningful policy framework and other interventions to address violence. Her Government had taken several measures to address violence against women. Domestic violence had been criminalized and the Sexual Harassment Act of 1998 protected the dignity and integrity of women and children. The Government also subscribed to the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Gender and Development Declaration. Its 2005 revised national plan of action for combating violence against women provided for legal, social, economic and cultural strategies and actions at various levels. Awareness-raising, advocacy and training of both men and women on the relevant laws had brought about positive changes. Women were claiming their rights in court and stiff sentences were being imposed on culprits.

41. Her Government had drawn up a National Strategy for Gender Development and, in order to meet its objectives, had institutionalized gender focal points in ministries, government departments and regional and local authorities who were responsible for mainstreaming gender in their respective sectors while linking up with the national gender machinery. It had also integrated a gender perspective in its National Strategy for Growth and Reduction of Poverty, in all clusters addressing reduction of income poverty, quality of life and social well-being, governance and accountability. Strategy interventions included entrepreneurship training for rural women and youth, review of laws, advocacy against cultural practices that denied women and young people access to resources and actions to protect women from violence while dispensing justice to perpetrators.

42. Thanks to affirmative action, Tanzania had reached the 30-per-cent target of the Beijing Platform for Action and SADC for women's participation in

politics and was consolidating its efforts towards achieving the goal of gender parity by 2015. It had achieved the Millennium Development Goal of gender parity in primary education and was turning its efforts to secondary and tertiary education. However, the impact of HIV/AIDS had frustrated efforts for the advancement of women, for instance, when a girl had to drop out of school to care for sick or orphaned brothers and sisters. Interventions in that area should target women and especially girls.

43. Tanzania's national policy and legislative frameworks for the advancement of women were well developed, but the challenge was to translate those frameworks into practical action. Technical and financial resources were limited and she called for more cooperation and support at the international level.

44. **Ms. Kamal** (Bahrain) said that under His Majesty King Hamad Bin Isa Al-Khalifa, Bahrain had made great strides in increasing women's participation in national decision-making and development. Her Majesty Shaikha Sabika Bint Ibrahim Al-Khalifa had hosted the second meeting of the Supreme Council of the Arab Women's Organization (AWO) in Bahrain in 2005 and an AWO conference was scheduled to be held in Bahrain in November 2006 to review progress made since the first Arab Women's Summit in 2000. Bahraini women had risen to high positions, notably Sheikha Haya Rashed Al-Khalifa, President of the current session of the General Assembly. In the year since Bahrain's Supreme Council for Women had developed a national strategy for the advancement of Bahraini women, many steps had been taken to increase the role of women in society and political life, including a programme to prepare women for participation in the upcoming elections on 25 November 2006. Those measures stemmed not only from the implementation of international agreements and resolutions, but also from the value placed on the role of women in society by Arab and Islamic civilization.

45. **Ms. Sharma** (Nepal) said that her Government was ushering in a new era of multiparty democracy, the rule of law and human rights and had taken measures to ensure 33-per-cent participation of women in all political bodies and in the civil service, allowing them to take part in decision-making processes at all levels. It attached great importance to the work of the United Nations in the field of the advancement of women and believed that the outcome documents of the Beijing Conference and the twenty-third special session would play an important role in achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

46. More than half the population of Nepal were women and girls and poverty, illiteracy, lack of access to economic resources, poor maternal health, trafficking of women and girls for commercial and sexual exploitation, gender discrimination and domestic violence were some of the challenges facing them. Lack of education and awareness of their rights and sociocultural superstition and traditions compounded their problems, especially in rural areas. The Government was fully committed to women's development through legislative and administrative measures and development policies and programmes. Targeted programmes had also been undertaken for disadvantaged and marginalized groups and rural women. The Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare, headed by a woman, had made efforts to mainstream gender into the development programmes of all sectoral agencies. Nepal was a party to several international human rights instruments, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and had submitted its periodic reports to the respective treaty-monitoring bodies. The United Nations system should increase its technical assistance to States for the implementation of those instruments. Empowering women economically and politically should be a collective commitment of the international community, which should support developing countries, particularly the least developed countries, to that end.

47. **Mr. Wigwe** (Nigeria) said that his Government's commitment to combating discrimination against women had been demonstrated through a number of policy initiatives and programmes at all levels of government. Concerted efforts had been made to outlaw customary or traditional practices that were discriminatory and harmful to the physical and mental health of women and girls, such as child marriage and betrothal, trafficking in persons, discriminatory and dehumanizing widowhood rites, female genital mutilation and street hawking by school-aged children, especially girls.

48. His Government took seriously its commitment to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, as manifested not only in its national policies drawn from the provisions of the Convention but also in its compliance with its reporting obligations. The process of incorporating the

provisions of the Convention into domestic law was at an advanced stage, following completion of the first reading of the relevant bill in the National Assembly. Its passage would increase the number of women in elective office by up to 30 per cent and open up new vistas of opportunity for women. The Government was grateful to UNIFEM for its ongoing awareness-raising programme in the country in preparation for the 2007 general elections. That grass-roots effort had sensitized women to their political rights and responsibilities and provided them with an avenue to contribute to the political debate and thus increase their participation. The Government's new national gender policy, to be launched by the end of 2006, would provide for equal representation of women and address women's human rights and the mainstreaming of gender issues in all sectoral policies and programmes.

49. Concerned at the vulnerability of women in conflict situations, his Government was restructuring the security sector to include a national peace policy aimed at addressing gender-based violence in crisis situations. In the area of health-care delivery, women's special needs received particular attention. For instance, a nationwide survey on vesico vaginal fistula (VVF) had prompted the rehabilitation of VVF treatment centres and a nationwide advocacy campaign on safe motherhood.

50. In an attempt to mainstream gender into national programmes and activities, the Government had made it mandatory for ministries to give due consideration to gender issues in their annual budgets. A pilot programme on gender-responsive budgeting had provided training for budget officers. In the area of poverty alleviation, the Government had established two schemes offering credit to women, the Women's Fund for Economic Empowerment and the Business Development Fund for Women, which had benefited women's cooperatives and women agricultural workers.

51. Some of the obstacles to the advancement of women in Nigeria could be surmounted through political will and cultural reorientation, but that would require concerted effort by the international community, through development assistance, capacity-building and training to overcome the myriad problems facing women not only in Nigeria but all over the world.

52. **Mr. Belinga-Eboutou** (Cameroon) said that, despite a host of international instruments and actions for the promotion of women's rights, violence against women persisted in every country of the world. Eliminating such violence was a universal task that required two elements, education and poverty eradication. Education empowered women and made them aware of their rights and responsibilities in society, allowing them to overcome the many obstacles they faced and to help create an environment conducive to the fulfilment of both men's and women's potential. Poverty eradication was important because women could not make progress in a society that lacked hospitals or roads and in which they had no access to markets, schools or microcredit. The development and adoption of international rules, action programmes or other instruments would be worthless unless they were built on education and poverty alleviation measures. He commended the Commission on the Status of Women for its many contributions to the advancement of women's rights and the elimination of gender-based discrimination.

53. **Mr. Rangel** (Angola) said that full implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly was essential for achieving world development goals. World leaders had agreed to promote gender equality and eliminate gender discrimination through a range of measures. Improving women's education, reproductive health and economic opportunities was of great strategic value and a key to achieving the Millennium Development Goals. His Government allocated 28.5 per cent of its budget to measures designed to guarantee women's access to senior positions, such as literacy campaigns, building of schools, expansion of family planning services, improvement of women's access to microcredit and implementation of the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper. Considerable progress had been made in reducing violence against women, thanks to human rights education campaigns conducted with the police, the armed forces and the general population. The Government had also activated a process of revision of the Criminal Code and the Code of Civil Procedure that would integrate and harmonize traditional common law with the legal system in order to eliminate discrimination. All available resources would be utilized to enhance women's participation in society and eliminate all forms of violence against women and children.

54. **Ms. Chenoweth** (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)) said that the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women was currently the mechanism most instrumental in removing obstacles to women's basic human rights, particularly its article 14, which addressed the problems faced by rural women. FAO recognized not only the crucial role played by women, but also the need to promote their advancement and mainstream gender issues into development policies and strategies. Rural areas required urgent and decisive attention because 75 per cent of the world's poor lived in such areas and depended on agriculture and related rural crafts, trade and services for their livelihoods. Rural women played an important role in securing the future of agricultural systems and food and livelihood security. The goal of creating an enabling social environment for the advancement of women and for rural and agricultural development required the close cooperation of many actors at all levels. FAO was fully committed to establishing partnerships for more effective action in promoting the advancement of women and gender equality as a means of fighting hunger and poverty.

55. **Ms. Filip** (Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU)) said that gender inequality and discrimination in society at large could be addressed only by working collectively through and with parliaments and their members. A decade after the Beijing Conference, it was unfortunate, indeed unbelievable, that women around the world still faced such obstacles as discrimination, lack of access to medical care and illiteracy. It was also regrettable that most parliaments remained male-dominated. Around the world, violence against women was a fundamental violation of their rights that took many forms, including trafficking, sexual and domestic violence and female genital mutilation, and it was most acute in conflict and post-conflict areas.

56. Violence against women hindered human development and contradicted democratic principles and must therefore be addressed by humankind as a whole. The recent IPU Assembly had passed a resolution focusing on how parliaments could and must promote effective ways of combating violence against women in all fields. The resolution outlined specific measures for prevention, assistance and criminalization, including reviewing legislation that hindered gender equality, ratifying international and regional instruments, establishing observatories on violence against women and allocating fiscal resources to ensure the implementation of legislation and measures to combat violence against women. Cooperation was important for meeting the goal of ending violence in general and violence against women and children in particular. IPU had a strong partnership with the United Nations and had worked closely with its Division for the Advancement of Women in organizing annual seminars and sessions on violence against women. It would continue to focus on female genital mutilation and would make it a priority to assist parliaments in developing legislation in that field.

57. **Mr. Ndjonkou** (International Labour Organization (ILO)) said that in the area of violence against women, ILO undertook policy development, research and operational and awareness-raising activities on workplace violence, including sexual harassment at work, forced labour and trafficking and child labour. On sexual harassment, a form of violence that affected mainly women, efforts had been made to sensitize governments and workers' and employers' organizations and examples of good practices had been collected from local and national governments, enterprises and trade unions that had successfully implemented zero-tolerance policies and violence-prevention training programmes. Inequality in pay and remuneration was perhaps the most persistent form of discrimination between men and women and full implementation of ILO Convention No. 100 establishing the principle of equal pay for work of equal value would help reduce violence against women caused by economic inequality.

58. ILO was concerned about the labour dimensions of human trafficking, which it viewed as contrary to full, productive and freely chosen employment. To achieve its goal of protecting migrant workers, ILO focused on improving the knowledge base on working conditions, recruitment and employment practices for such workers. It had also implemented some 30 anti-trafficking projects and was developing a body of research to inform new programmes and projects targeting forced labour and a comprehensive information guide on "Preventing Discrimination, Exploitation and Abuse of Women Migrant Workers".

59. With regard to the status of women in the United Nations system, ILO had succeeded in raising the proportion of women at the senior management level from 32 per cent in 1995 to 39 per cent in 2005. Action was also being taken to identify obstacles to staff

members' achievement of a work/life balance and to create a family-friendly working environment at ILO.

The meeting rose at 12.45 p.m.